

## **Senior Call Check Live, Reassurance Caller Volunteer - Position Description**

Title of Program: Maryland Department of Aging, Senior Call Check

Title of AmeriCorps Position: Reassurance Caller

Name of Supervisor/Point of Contact: Peter Tuths, Program Director, MDOA

### Community Need:

Many older adults struggle to maintain social connections and meaningful activities because they may not have many friends and family members nearby, they may not drive, children are grown, and in some cases they're retired. When asked to further limit contact with the public to reduce exposure to COVID-19, they may experience increased loneliness and isolation.<sup>1</sup> In fact, nearly one in four adults aged 65 and older are considered to be socially isolated.

Social isolation and loneliness in older adults come with a variety of health consequences. Studies have shown that they can lead to as much as a 50% increased risk of dementia, a 29% increased risk of heart disease, and a 32% increased risk of experiencing a stroke. Loneliness among heart failure patients has been associated with a nearly 70% increased risk of hospitalization and a 57% risk of emergency department visits.<sup>2</sup>

The Maryland Department of Aging launched the Senior Call Check program, free to Maryland residents 65 and older, to help address the pressing issue of isolation among Maryland seniors. The program provides daily, automated telephone check-in calls to help prevent scenarios where a senior has fallen, or experienced other medical hardships, that prevent them from seeking assistance. All participants in the Senior Call Check program have the option to sign up for weekly live calls from real, live program volunteers. These live reassurance calls help reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation, and provide socialization that many older adults won't experience otherwise.

To read more about the Senior Call Check program, [click here](#).

### Member Responsibilities:

SCC Live Reassurance Callers have the following responsibilities:

- Place phone calls each week to senior Maryland residents from a provided list

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<sup>1</sup> <https://covidlink.maryland.gov/content/faqs/#faq5>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/lonely-older-adults.html>

- Build amicable relationships with the senior participants i.e. engage in thoughtful and respectful conversations week-to-week
- Fill out Google Forms with information about their weekly calls, including the number of calls made, the number of participants who answered the phone, etc.
- Assess whether participants need referrals to their local area agencies on aging
- Participate in at least one volunteer training session
- Be responsive to communication from program supervisors
- Other relevant tasks as needed
- Commit to 5 - 10 hours of volunteering each week
- Volunteers are expected to stay with the program for a minimum of 3 months

Enter here the estimated end date of your term with the program (minimum of 3 months from the start. This can be extended as desired):

#### Communication Expectations

- Volunteers are expected to check their email on a semi-regular basis (at least once every 1-2 days) for communication from program supervisors
- The primary form of communication will be email, but volunteers will be provided with the contact number of a program supervisor should the need for immediate assistance arise

#### Required Trainings:

All new SCC Live volunteers are required to undergo a reassurance caller training session. Trainings typically last 90 minutes, and are held bi-monthly. During the training session, volunteers will learn how to utilize call scripts to guide conversations with participants in various scenarios, how to enter weekly call data, and what's expected of them as SCC Live volunteers.

Volunteers must have completed background checks.

#### Required Skills/Experience:

SCC Live looks for the following attributes in its reassurance callers:

- A positive attitude and ability to converse with seniors in a friendly, thoughtful, and respectful manner
- The ability to independently maintain a weekly schedule - reassurance callers will be responsible for ensuring that they call all of their assigned senior participants each week and report their calls in a timely manner
- Basic level of comfort with Google Sheets, Google Docs, and Google Forms